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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-3218**

September 5, 2018

Mr. William B. "Brock" Long  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street SW  
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Administrator Long,

I write to insist that FEMA improve its methods for evaluating homeownership for Puerto Rican families working to return to their homes. I have written to you previously about the denial of Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP) support for Puerto Ricans and yet the very real and desperate housing needs of hundreds of thousands of these citizens continues to go unaddressed by your agency. I appreciate your recent work with outside groups to improve your processes for assessing homeownership status, and I ask that you expand this work as well as notify families whose applications were initially denied that new criteria for evaluation are available.

I have recently learned that more than 335,000 applications for disaster assistance funding to rebuild homes have been denied and that more than 43,000 of these cases have been appealed. It is my understanding that the primary reason that these applications have been denied is the lack of proof of homeownership. I've also learned that your agency has applied an inconsistent and arbitrary approval process - sometimes denying applications when a deed was present and sometimes approving applications with a sworn affidavit. People are struggling to get back into their homes because of your agency's bureaucratic mistakes. That's unacceptable.

I am encouraged to learn of the Office of Chief Counsel's work with Latino Justice and the National Low Income Housing Coalition to develop "sworn statements" as an attainable means to allow Puerto Ricans to demonstrate homeownership. It is my understanding that a similar process was used successfully in Texas. I encourage you to notify families whose applications for disaster assistance have been denied of these "sworn statements" so that they may appeal their cases. I also encourage you to expedite and otherwise improve the process.

Things as simple as ensuring that FEMA employees sent to evaluate Puerto Rican homes speak Spanish and understand how Puerto Ricans demonstrate ownership of their homes is not courtesy, it's crucial. Puerto Ricans are Americans. They deserve the same respect due any other American who has suffered from the effects of natural disaster. Your agency has been charged with ensuring that relief is provided in a timely and effective manner to our fellow citizens and I implore you to take immediate steps to improve the disaster assistance funding application process to meet the unique needs of the Puerto Rican people.

Thank you for your attention to this issue and I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Sean Patrick Maloney  
Member of Congress